

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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Standard of Living

1. [] the enormous improvement in living standards in the Soviet Union which had been made since 1946, especially after the currency reform in 1947. Apparently the average Soviet was also favorably impressed by this development. He recognized that progress had been made, regarded the rate of progress as satisfactory, and believed that the future would bring further improvements. [] Soviet associates evidently considered existing living conditions more satisfactory than in prewar years.

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2. Despite the frequent and continuing complaints which were heard about high prices and shortages of consumer goods, [] the average Soviet worker as well as the intelligentsia was generally satisfied with present living conditions. The standard of living in the Soviet Union, as long as it is maintained at least at the present level and shows signs of gradual improvement, will not prove to be a source of unrest in the long run. 25X1
3. The Fryazino population did not react very enthusiastically to the initial currency reform in 1947 because of the loss of savings which many incurred. And, then, little cash was on hand for necessary purchases although some goods were cheaper and more readily available. However, the Fryazino population reacted very favorably to subsequent price reductions.
4. In later years (after 1949), the price of clothing and other non-food consumer items gradually increased after an overall price reduction had been effected. The net effect was that reductions were only about one-half as great as announced in the original price reduction laws. These creeping price increases did not seem to produce any opposition on the part of Soviet consumers as they did not apply to basic food items. Expensive "hard" consumer goods and not basic staples were most affected by later price reductions. The Soviet workers did not regard this as favored treatment of upper income groups but rather as an indication that the Soviet light industry was increasing its output.
5. It was also plainly obvious that many food items which previously had been plentiful became scarcity items after 1949 or 1950. This was particularly true of butter, white bread, fruit, and vegetables.
6. [] no indication that price reductions were in any way directly related to the increase of production norms. 25X1

Beggars

7. There were relatively few beggars in the town of Fryazino. A great number were encountered in front of Moscow churches, showing their scabs and sores in scenes reminiscent of India, and on the suburban trains leading into the capital. Most of the latter group were professionals, usually disabled war veterans who had obtained a speculator's license from the State permitting them to beg. These unfortunates would enter a railroad car and sing a song, invariably war songs about the Battle of Stalingrad, as their offering. Then they would give a little talk about how they had lost a leg or an arm at Stalingrad and would pass the hat around.

Crime

8. Thievery was the most common form of crime in the Fryazino area. The local militia was unable to cope with this situation, to judge by the extreme frequencies of robberies.
9. Pickpocketing, as is well known, was very common in Moscow; at public markets, in stores, on streetcars, and in other places where large crowds gathered. Most pickpocketing was

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done by boys 15 to 17 years of age who worked in gangs [redacted] most of them were orphans who were being raised in State institutions.

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10. The Moscow population had a great fear of these petty thieves. Even the militia was afraid to intervene in a daylight robbery. My Soviet acquaintances claimed that the young ruffians would get even with anyone who informed on them to the police. It was rumored that they slashed open the mouths of informers - the sign of a tattler.
11. Bribery of petty officials was quite common in the Fryazino area but evidently not serious enough to harm the functioning of the governmental apparatus. Bribes were generally not offered in money but in the form of food or clothing articles, primarily vodka. Embezzling of State funds was also a frequent occurrence in Fryazino. Employees of the local magazin were periodically arrested every two years or so for embezzlement. Stiff sentences for embezzlement (15 to 20 years in a forced labor camp) enabled State authorities to keep this practice under control. The very low salaries of State employees in a magazin or gastronom was the basic cause of this social illness. These employees were almost forced to resort to such practices in order to earn enough money to keep alive.

Class Differences

12. High Party functionaries and high army officers must be classified at the top of the Soviet social scale. Also belonging to the Soviet elite because of their large incomes were popular actors, actresses, and artists. [redacted] the technical intelligentsia as next in line in the social scale.
13. Class distinctions between workers and the technical intelligentsia consisted of wide income differences, closed social circles, and varying moral values. For example, a nachalnik would never think of going to a small public tavern and having a drink with the workers of his plant, but only associated with colleagues enjoying the same economic and social status. It was also true that various groups within the technical intelligentsia formed closed social circles; a nachalnik associated only with other section or shop bosses, an engineer with other engineers, and so on. Furthermore, social custom demanded that a man and wife in the upper or middle social strata be registered as such with civil authorities. Workers and others in lower social strata were apparently under no moral or social compulsion to legalize their marriages.
14. The fact that students attending higher educational institutions and the last three years of secondary schools were required to pay tuition fees indicates that the upper classes of Soviet society were given preferential treatment. [redacted] higher Party bosses made certain that their sons were accepted in a university, even when they had not received a gold or silver medal on graduating from secondary school. The manner in which housing was assigned to employees at Institute 160 was another indication of class favoritism. A Soviet employee of the institute did not receive an apartment in accordance with his ability to pay but in accordance

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with his position or academic degree. A kandidat received a better apartment than an ordinary engineer and an engineer invariably received a better apartment than a shop foreman, although it was entirely possible that a shop foreman received higher wages than the engineer.

15. [] no tension between the various social groups and classes at Institute 160. Apparently the Soviet workers considered the present class structure in the Soviet Union as completely normal.

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Religion

16. To judge by the prevalence of ikons and by attendance at church services, [] the entire older generation of inhabitants of nearby farm villages remained faithful to the tenets of the Orthodox Church. Although it is undoubtedly true that a smaller percentage of the Fryazino urban population were religious believers, this still constituted a substantial group of people, to judge by the number who attended church and celebrated religious holidays. On the other hand, [] the Soviet younger generation was little interested and was losing interest in religious matters.

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17. [] religious services at the nearest church located in the neighboring town of Semashko [] was always full when services were held on Saturday and Sunday. Although the older generation was predominately represented, some younger people, including soldiers from the nearby military camp, were always to be seen there.

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